

## **MEETING SUMMARY : SURFACE PASSENGER ADVISORY COUNCIL**

---

### **Meeting Time and Location**

The first Surface Passenger Advisory Council meeting for the *Louisiana Statewide Transportation Plan Update* was held on April 17, 2001 at the Marriott Hotel in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

### **Meeting Attendees**

The following persons attended the meeting:

#### **Advisory Council Members/Representatives**

- ☐ Louis K. Bangma, Jr., LARP
- ☐ John Guignard, Guignard Biodynamics
- ☐ Walter Brooks for John LeBourgeois, Regional Planning Commission
- ☐ Danny L. Young, LA Travel Promotion Association

#### **Non-Member DOTD Staff**

- ☐ Carol Cranshaw, Manager, Public Transportation Division
- ☐ Brian Parsons, Manager, Rail Division
- ☐ Donna Lavigne, LDOTD, Public Transportation Division
- ☐ Jim Joffrion, Planning
- ☐ Mike Schiro, Highway Programs
- ☐ Art Rogers, LDOTD/LRTC
- ☐ Bill Shrewsbury, Manager, Grade Crossing Safety Program

#### **Consultant Team Members**

- ☐ Jim Amdal, University of New Orleans (Presenter/Facilitator)
- ☐ Anne-Marie Rooskens, University of New Orleans
- ☐ Butch Babineaux, WSA
- ☐ Chris Chritton, WSA
- ☐ Mike Heath, Alliance Transportation Group, Inc
- ☐ J.D. Allen, Alliance Transportation Group, Inc

#### **Others**

- ☐ Robert Canfield, Traffic Engineering Consultant
- ☐ James Guilbeau, Sierra Club, New Orleans Group
- ☐ Josh Gregorzewski, FHWA – GA Division (c/o NORPC)
- ☐ J. Kent Rogers, NLCOG (Representing Mayor George Dement, Bossier City)
- ☐ Bryon Davis, Parsons Brinkerhoff

- ❑ John Irion, South Tangipahoa Parish Port Commission
- ❑ Glenda Jeansonne, Louisiana Airport Authority
- ❑ Darrell Saizan, New Orleans International Airport
- ❑ Roy Miller, Shreveport Airport Authority

### **Meeting Purpose**

The purpose of this meeting was to provide Advisory Council members and other attendees with an overview of the Plan Update, a review of Surface Passenger related elements discussed at the first Statewide Transportation Conference held in New Orleans on July 31-August 1, 2000, and to discuss strategic issues and suggested changes to the overall goals and objectives included in the 1996 *Statewide Intermodal Transportation Plan (SITP)*.

### **Summary of Meeting Comments**

Important items discussed at the meeting are summarized as follows:

- ❑ Given the nature of limited funds for existing and future systems, new strategic alliances / partnerships will be required. The New Orleans Riverfront Streetcar is a good example of both cash and non-cash local match monies provided by a unique partnership with the development community for new public transit service.
- ❑ In addition to the current plan, the update will also consider private surface passenger transportation providers such as charter bus companies, private taxicab companies, vanpool providers, and Greyhound.
- ❑ The state faces a big challenge with regard to surface passenger transportation provision: limited financial resources (state-wide Parish Transportation Fund was recently decreased by 25%) and an equally limited history of non-highway investment. We are also looking at a diminishing population growth rate, etc. If existing trends persist, the transit dependent population will increase (poor, elderly, non-driving tourists) in both urban and rural service areas causing a greater need for transit service.
- ❑ "We need to do more with less!" Consequently we need to maximize the positive impacts of ITS applications, continue to work to implement the recommendations of SCOP and support the on-going efforts of the state's Inter-Agency Transportation Coordination Committee (IATCC), and continue to investigate the applications of new transit technologies (rapid bus deployment).
- ❑ To obtain the needed level of financing for public transportation in Louisiana LDOTD and its partners (LPTA, LPC) should establish a pro-active marketing / education / public relations plan for both Baton Rouge and Washington legislators as well as the general public. Selling points for increasing public transit funding should relate to air quality impacts, congestion mitigation, and environmental enhancements. This multi-faceted program needs to be developed quickly as the role of a national surface passenger rail system will be debated in the US Congress possibly this session.
- ❑ The proposed surface passenger transportation plan should start with a needs assessment. Once this phase is complete, selected projects for implementation

need to be “guaranteed winners” that can establish a record of success for the affected locality or operating entity: New Orleans Riverfront Streetcar Phase 1 and 2 (1988 – 1991) is a good example.

- ❑ With regard to the creation of a statewide transportation authority, it was pointed out that a champion / committed leader is needed, as has been demonstrated in other states and regions.
- ❑ To get the legislators involved, a bottoms-up approach is proposed: the state should identify projects in each urban area relating to both public transit and rail infrastructure improvements. There are lots of funding mechanisms (RIFF, TIFIA etc.) The state (LDOTD) should come to the table with the MPO's and the local officials to develop this list. With the support of the local elected officials (MPO's policy committee), they can 'educate' their legislators in Baton Rouge and/or Washington, DC to obtain their support. This will also address the need to close the gap between the MPO's and LDOTD.
- ❑ LATTS shows that there will be significant trade driven impacts on highways and freight rail corridors. Consequently, this will create future constraints on potential passenger rail development with regards to existing rail corridor capacity issues.
- ❑ The Amtrak Crescent will split in Meridian, Mississippi to travel to Dallas (new service named the Star) as well as New Orleans. The existing KCS “dark (unsignalized) ” freight corridor will require an infrastructure investment of \$45 million. Amtrak has proposed that the three participating states (MS, LA, TX) each contribute \$0.75M (one-time) to provide the required credit risk premium for an RRIF (Railroad Rehabilitation Infrastructure Fund) loan.
- ❑ No LDOTD money has been projected yet for grade crossings on this 'dark' route. The issue of grade crossing, at the state level, remains a shared concern by both LDOTD, the local elected officials in affected locations, the general population, Amtrak, and the operating freight rail companies for all the freight / passenger rail corridors throughout the state.
- ❑ It is expected that in July 2001, the High Speed Rail Investment Act will be passed into law by Congress. Based upon this probability, projects and / or programs need to be developed for the Gulf Coast High Speed Rail Corridors now under study. Competition for the HSRIA funds will be stiff. Those corridors ready with plans and local monies committed will receive first priority. California, certain East Coast routes, as well as the Midwest Regional Corridor Program are poised for funding at this time.
- ❑ A local / state mechanism to obtain 'matching money' should be developed. Matching funds may not necessarily require cash. Land, material donations, usufruct of property, etc. are all qualifying categories for local match.
- ❑ The Plan should consider State strategic investments for economic development benefits linked to transportation.

- ❑ Senator Trent Lott (R-Mississippi) will propose a Rail Relocation Program for the whole nation possibly this legislative year. The proposed relocation of rail along the Mississippi Gulf Coast (Gulf-21 project moves the existing CSX freight corridor inland 10 – 12 miles / ROW north of I-10) and the connector problems with the adjacent states can be addressed under this bill.
- ❑ The state needs to identify projects which could qualify for various existing and proposed federal programs: the New Orleans Gateway (freight rail debottlenecking) and the NOIA-CBD passenger rail link could be demonstration candidates.
- ❑ The current plan (SITP) focuses on surface passenger connectivity between the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) areas, not within the MPO's. This may or may not have been a good decision. Discussion took place if the urban areas should be included in the surface passenger transportation plan. The RPC questioned why the State should get into transit projects not on state systems. An argument in favor of getting the State into urban areas was brought up: the urban feeder systems are very important to the overall statewide surface passenger transportation system. The plan should incorporate by reference, at the very least, all the urban projects as determined by the various MPO's. However, the plan should be flexible! It should not be the case that LDOTD points out that 'because something is not in the plan, we will not look at it'.
- ❑ When doing work on state highways, transit elements should be considered i.e. locations of bus stops, lanes for buses. LDOTD currently only focuses on highway traffic improvements but not on bus/transit improvements.
- ❑ Rural areas should have transit connections and minimum specifications for bus facilities are needed.
- ❑ On the federal level a bus safety initiative is being put forward. LDOTD might be responsible for implementing in Louisiana. This could be an issue which needs to be addressed in the plan update.
- ❑ A balanced approach to both highway and surface passenger transportation development is needed.
- ❑ In Shreveport the casino patrons are big transit users. They may represent new partnership opportunities for both the region as well as the state.
- ❑ The cultural, historical, economic profiles / differences within the various parts of Louisiana need to be recognized and factored into the surface passenger transportation plan: for example, New Orleanians are used to, and have traditionally utilized public transportation (streetcars and buses), whereas in Baton Rouge public transportation has a limited user group and little recent history of utilization. This same issue is faced in other urban and rural areas throughout the state.

### **Summary of Revisions to Plan Goals and Objectives**

**Goal 1:** The word "safe" was added after the word "balanced."

**Goal 2:** The phrase “or service requirements” was added at the end of the goal. A parenthetical note was added stating that Louisiana’s economy is becoming “24/7.”

**Goal 6:** The phrase “To develop an efficient transportation system that limits air, water and noise pollution” was changed to state:

“To develop an efficient transportation system that improves air, water and noise indices”

The phrase “and uses land resources efficiently (smart growth)” was added at the end of the goal statement.